

**75<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly  
Sixth Committee**

**Agenda Item 86: The Rule of law at the national and international levels**

**Statement by Ms. Laura Katholnig**

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Mr. Chair,

My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union and I would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity:

Austria would like to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on “Strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities”. As the coordinator of the Group of Friends of the Rule of Law, consisting of over 50 delegations, Austria is pleased that the Secretary-General has continued to place a high priority on the rule of law as a matter of system-wide policy coordination in particular in these challenging times.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every part of the world. The report reveals that implementing measures to contain the pandemic in compliance with the rule of law while protecting people’s human rights and access to justice has become a critical challenge that we all must rise up to. The effectiveness of government measures to contain the pandemic very much depends on the capacity of public institutions and their leadership to provide transparent, effective, and accountable actions, in compliance with the rule of law.

Building resilient, strong and efficient institutions that can be trusted and supported by citizens is particularly linked to the fight against corruption, which is the focus of our debate today.

Corruption has detrimental effects on societies, the enjoyment of human rights, the economic development of entire countries and the rule of law. It is high time that we intensify our efforts to combat and in particular to prevent corruption.

In this regard, Austria welcomes the convening of a Special Session of the General Assembly on Corruption in 2021 as an important opportunity to reinforce the full and effective implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). The Convention adopted sixteen years ago provides a holistic and comprehensive legally binding framework for the international community in fighting corruption. With 187 parties, the Convention is almost universal and is the bedrock of our joint efforts against corruption.

The Convention framework includes a country-by-country review mechanism, whose recommendations regularly trigger improvements of national anti-corruption policies and practices. The UNCAC’s Review Mechanism must be strengthened and continued beyond the current second review cycle in order

to accelerate the implementation of the main anti-corruption SDG targets, most notably SDG 16.

Additionally, next year's Special Session should further strengthen the important anti-corruption work under the auspices of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). All anti-corruption training, capacity building and technical assistance should be stronger linked and coordinated with measures and programs contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Austria is proud to host the UNODC and the International Anti Corruption Academy (IACA), which create a true "International Anti-Corruption Hub" in Vienna. Let me highlight some of the important work these organizations are doing to support governments' measures to prevent and combat corruption. We commend UNODC's technical assistance and capacity building work in line with UNCAC in supporting States in the fields of prevention, education, asset recovery, integrity and the criminal justice system. Austria firmly believes in the transformative role of education and training to enhance awareness and integrity both within the public and the private sector. In this regard, let me also emphasize the important work of the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA), an international organization with 80 parties, which offers first-class holistic anti-corruption education and training for academics, civil servants and practitioners. We encourage all Member States that have not yet done so, to consider acceding to IACA.

In his recent report on the Rule of Law the Secretary-General has confirmed that "corruption is often deeply ingrained in the political and socioeconomic fabric of society". Thus, there are no quick solutions. Only a long-term investment into education and training ranging from school curricula to anti-corruption courses for both the public and private sector will make a difference. Such a preventive strategy is our sole option to create a lasting foundation for individual ethical decision-making, a culture of transparency and of rejection of corruption at all levels of society.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that our efforts to promote the rule of law do not serve an abstract goal, but the protection of the rights and interests of individuals. Austria, also in its role as coordinator of the Group of Friends of the Rule of Law, will continue to give utmost priority to this subject.

Thank you.

